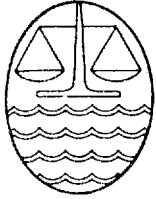




Approved For Release 2001/12/05 : CIA-RDP82S00697R000300110011-3

UNITED NATIONS



THIRD CONFERENCE ON THE LAW OF THE SEA

Distr.
GENERAL

A/CONF.62/39
18 February 1975
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

Third session

LETTER DATED 12 FEBRUARY 1975 FROM THE DEPUTY PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE, CHARGE D'AFFAIRES a.i., OF FRANCE TO THE
UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to refer to the notes by which the Secretariat periodically advises Member States of the decisions taken by certain States extending the breadth of their territorial waters beyond 12 nautical miles.

The French Government believes that it is most regrettable that such measures should be taken at a time when the third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea is seeking to propose to States the adoption of rules which take into account the interests of all States.

Furthermore, both at the bilateral level and in connexion with the work undertaken under the auspices of the United Nations to reform the law of the sea, the French Government has had occasion to indicate that in its opinion the maximum limit of 12 miles marking the breadth of territorial waters represented the best possible compromise between the interests of the international community and those of the coastal State, it being understood that the latter could exercise, beyond that limit, specific and wide-ranging economic prerogatives.

Under these circumstances, while it feels duty-bound to recall that it fully reserves its rights and those of its nationals with respect to vessels flying its flag and to aircraft registered in its territory, in connexion with the above-mentioned unilateral decisions, the French Government hopes that the third Conference on the Law of the Sea, which is to continue its work at Geneva from 17 March to 10 May 1975, will make it possible to find a universally acceptable solution to the problem of the breadth of territorial waters.

I should be grateful if you would have this note circulated to the permanent missions of States Members of the United Nations.

Accept, Sir, etc.

(Signed) Jacques LECOMPT
Deputy Permanent Representative,
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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